

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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FM AMCONSUL BELIZE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6584

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

C O N F I D E N T I A L BELIZE 788

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, BH

SUBJECT: ELECTIONS??

AS DEPARTMENT AWARE, NATIONAL ELECTIONS MUST BE HELD PRIOR OCTOBER 1979 IN BELIZE. MOST PEOPLE HAVE ASSUMED PRICE AND PUP WOULD TAKE THE LONG RUN AND WAIT UNTIL LAST MINUTE TO CALL THEM. HOWEVER, POST IS INTERESTED AT NUMBER OF SOURCES AND VARIETY WHO SAY PREMIER MAY CALL ELECTIONS AS EARLY AS OCTOBER OF THIS YEAR. WE GET THIS REPORT FROM UDP AND FROM OTHERS AS WELL AND MANY SEEM TO BE TAKING IT SERIOUSLY. OUR ASSESSMENT IS THAT PRICE WOULD BE MAKING A MISTAKE AND, FOR THAT REASON WILL WAIT. NEVERTHELESS, FOLLOWING ARGUMENTS ARE PUT FORWARD.

FROM UDP VIEW, ELECTIONS NOW WOULD BE DESIRABLE. UDP LEADERS FEEL AS DO MOST OBSERVERS, THEIR CHANCES OF WINNING ARE GOOD SO WHY NOT GO AHEAD AND GET IT OVER WITH. OPPOSITION WOULD PLAN TO CAMPAIGN ON MAJOR ISSUES AND NOT "STREETS AND DRAINS" WHICH WERE SO EFFECTIVE IN CITY COUNCIL ELECTIONS IN DECEMBER '77. COMMUNISM, INDEPENDENCE AND OTHER MATTERS WILL BE STRONG PLANKS IN THEIR PLATFORM. UDP LEADERSHIP IS CONFIDENT THEIR PARTY IS GAINING STRENGTH IN RURAL AREAS WHERE IN PAST

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THEY HAVE LACKED SUPPORT; THEY WOULD LIKE TO GET ELECTIONS OVER BEFORE ON GOING ROAD RECONSTRUCTION STARTS PAYING OFF FOR PUP. ALSO, OPPOSITION CONTINUES TO FEEL THEY AND NOT PUP HAVE SCORED HIGHER FROM NY TALKS WITH UK. ALL OF THESE ARE SECONDARY HOWEVER TO FEELING OF MOMENTUM AND CONFIDENCE.

PUP SEES THINGS DIFFERENTLY; THERE CAN BE NO DOUBT THEY

AWARE AND PERHAPS SECRETLY SHARE UDP VIEWS ON MOMENTUM. THEY BELIEVE A SUDDEN CALL TO THE POLLING STATIONS WILL GIVE THE EDGE SINCE AS PARTY IN POWER THEY HAVE BUILT IN STRENGTH. PUP ALSO FEELS NEWLY INSTITUTED, COMPLICATED AND HIGHLY CRITICIZED BY UDP REGISTRATION SYSTEM WILL GIVE THEM ADDED SUPPORT. IT ALSO POSSIBLE PUP LEADERSHIP NOT AS SANGUINE AS OUTWARD APPEARANCES WOULD HAVE ONE BELIEVE ABOUT ANY PAY OFF THAT MAY ACCRUE FROM ROADS AND OTHER PROJECTS. IT ALSO QUITE POSSIBLE, THEY SPECULATE THAT JUXTAPOSITION IN 1979 OF TORN UP STREETS IN BELIZE CITY DUE TO CANADIAN WATER AND SEWER PROJECT ALONG WITH DOWNED POWER LINES DUE TO GOB MAJOR REWIRING PROJECT WILL NOT BE SEEN BY JOHN Q. PUBLIC AS BEING IMMEDIATELY BENEFICIAL TO HIM AND HIS FAMILY*. FINALLY, PUP CAN ALWAYS COUNT ON THE PRICE TOUCH; AND, PERHAPS THAT TOUCH WHICH CAN, WE UNDERSTAND, SOMETIMES BE A CRUSHING BLOW MAY BE JUST WHAT THE PUP WILL NEED.

A BELIZEAN SOURCE HERE, A PROMINENT BUSINESS MAN AND LONG TIME CLOSE FRIEND OF THE PREMIER COMMENTS ALONG THE LINES THAT NO MATTER WHEN HE CALLS FOR SUPPORT, HIS FRIEND IS LIKELY GET WHIPPED. HE SAYS THAT IF THE PREMIER WAITS FOR THE ROADS, THE EARTH STATION, NEW CONSTRUCTION AND OTHER GOODIES TO PAY OFF, THAT THE PARTY WILL BE SPLIT AND THE UDP EVEN MORE POWERFUL. HE CITES ALSO A GROWING CONCERN THAT PUP IS TOO LEFTIST FOR THIS ESSENTIALLY RATHER CONSERVATIVE COMMUNITY AND STATES PRICE MAY HAVE TO DUMP SHOMAN IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN SOME

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SORT OF PARTY SOLIDARITY AND POPULAR APPEAL. ON THE OTHER HAND, SO THIS MAN ARGUES, RIGHT NOW THERE IS LITTLE PRICE CAN POINT TO WITH ANYTHING APPROACHING PRIDE. CONSEQUENTLY, HE SAYS ELECTIONS WILL NOT END UP TO THE BENEFIT OF THE PUP.

THE ATTITUDE OF SOME PUP STALWARTS MAY BE REFLECTED IN THE VIEWS OF ONE MEMBER OF CABINET, LOUIS SYLVESTRE, WHO TOLD US HE HAD BEEN IN HIS CONSTITUENCY ALL WEEKEND, ASSISTING WITH THE NEVER ENDING DETAIL OF THE REGISTERING PROCESS. "AND GETTING OUT THE VOTE FOR THE PUP?" WAS THE QUESTION, TO WHICH THE ANSWER WAS, "NO, GETTING OUT THE VOTE FOR LOUIS SYLVESTRE.". GOVERNOR MCENTEE, JUST PRIOR TO HIS DEPARTURE ON ANNUAL LEAVE IN THE UK SAID HE FELT SOME MAJOR CHANGES IN PARTY LEADERSHIP WERE QUITE POSSIBLE AND THAT SOME CROSSINGS OF THE FLOOR SHOULD NOT BE RULED OUT.

ANOTHER CONSULATE SOURCE SAYS THAT THE SENIOR LEVELS OF THE CIVIL SERVICE ARE GETTING STRONG HINTS FROM THE POLITICAL SIDE THAT ELECTIONS ARE COMING UP AND THAT THE GOVERNMENT WORKERS HAD BETTER BE PREPARED. THE SAME INDIVIDUAL TELLS US THAT THE CIVIL SERVICE LEANS TO BE ON THE UDP SIDE OF THE FENCE AND IS, THEREFORE, RESISTING OVERTURES OF THIS SORT FROM PUP. OUR OWN

ASSESSMENT OF CIVIL SERVICE ATTITUDES WOULD CONFIRM THIS REPORT.

IN SPITE OF INTERNAL STRESSES, POST FEELS, AS NOTED, THAT AN
EARLY CALL TO THE BALLOT BOX IS UNLIKELY. WE CONTINUE TO BE
INTERESTED, HOWEVER, IN THE GROWING CONFIDENCE OF THE UDP.
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